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Medal of Honor Recipient*

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Staff Sergeant Ty Carter

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ON THE COVER: DocuSign Chairman Keith Krach photographed by Jack Hutcheson

AN AMERICAN HERO

Ty Michael Carter, Staff Sergeant and Medal of Honor Recipient

BY CORRINE E. COOK

In 2013, Staff Sergeant Ty Michael Carter became the fifth living Medal of Honor recipient since the War in Vietnam. He is the second Medal of Honor recipient from the Battle of Kamdesh, one of the few conflicts in Afghanistan to catch the attention of the American public. Despite being the Army's equivalent to Elvis and The Rolling Stones combined, Ty Carter operates with anything but ego, greeting me with impeccable manners and an ease-inducing smile. As we sit down for our interview in Menlo Park, Ty is relaxed and confident. His father, Bay Area resident Mark Carter, is already beaming.

From the start, it's clear that Mark Carter is as proud as any father on earth. His son earned his Medal of Honor by distinguishing himself with "acts of gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty" in Afghanistan on October 3, 2009. The moment his son appeared on *The David*

Letterman Show wearing his Medal is second only to the moment the 44th President of the United States placed the Medal around Ty's neck for the first time in a special White House ceremony in 2013. Mark remembers, "It brings tears to my eyes when I think of it. First, he survived that day when so many other brave American soldiers did not. Second, I have a war hero for a son. I am very, very proud."

Dressed casually, Ty easily blends into Silicon Valley's sea of healthy and handsome entrepreneurs. We keep our chatter light in the beginning, and Ty speaks freely about his love of country music, his karaoke skills, and how Tito's handmade vodka is his go-to libation. When asked which country song of love and heartache might best describe his life, Ty responds, "All of them," with a laugh that soon turns somber. Upon closer look, Ty is far too young to wear a hearing aid and, when he smiles, his hazel eyes reveal a man wise yet weary well beyond his 37 years. I can't

PHOTO: JACK HUTCHESON



help but notice the steel band he wears on his right wrist with the names of eight fallen soldiers engraved in tribute. Far more than soldiers in the same unit, these men were friends, and Ty saw firsthand the ultimate sacrifice each one made for our country.

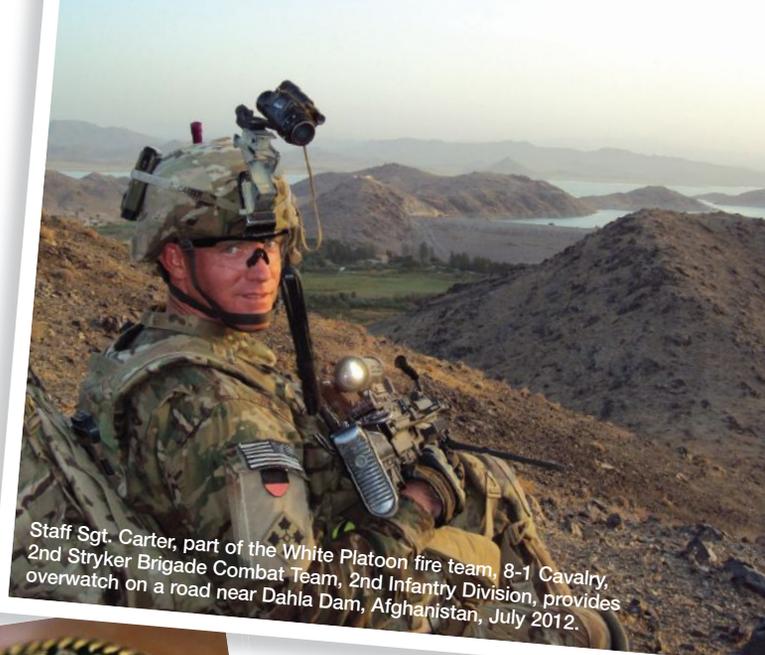
“I’m Still A Guy” (BRAD PAISLEY)

Several weeks later, I’m sitting in the back, listening to one of Ty’s high-profile speaking engagements involving a mix of current and retired service members, alongside a handful of VIP civilians. Since we first met, I’ve learned that the Medal of Honor, and those 75 living individuals who earned the right to wear it, command the utmost respect within our armed forces. When Ty Carter enters the room in full uniform, wearing his Medal of Honor, he is transformed. So, too, is the crowd, as loud chatter quickly dissolves into utter silence as Ty makes his way to the stage. As he is introduced by way of reading the official Medal of Honor citation, all active military personnel present immediately stand in respect. The rest of us quickly follow their cue. It is impossible not to feel awe, even chills, at the respect the Medal of Honor commands, particularly within the fabric of our armed forces. And Ty hasn’t yet said a word.

Since earning the medal in 2013, Ty has quickly earned a reputation on the speaker’s circuit as one who “excites, energizes, and truly engages his audience.” In a world where many are obsessed with stories of real-life experiences, the adrenaline and horror he experienced in Afghanistan is as real as it gets. As he begins to tell his story, one fact above all becomes clear: Ty Carter is fortunate to be alive. When he recounts each of the eight losses his unit suffered in an vicious ambush, the words of Winston Churchill come to mind: “If you are going through hell, keep going.” Humble above all else, Ty describes the life-or-death adrenaline rushes and super-human efforts by the entire unit as terror unfolded all around them. Our nation’s highest-ranking military officials insist that Ty Carter is more than just another soldier—his “remarkable acts of heroism and skill . . . exemplify what it means to be an American hero.”

“The Hurt” (JOHNNY CASH)

Ironically, Ty says he is plagued by feelings of failure. His most gut-wrenching memories from the firefight include a wounded comrade, Specialist Stephan L. Mace, pinned down about 30 feet away for hours. Taking a deep breath, Ty recalls the agony of watching Mace exposed, dying, and beyond anyone’s safe reach. “A good man was lying there wounded, begging for my help,” he explains, swallowing hard as he fights back tears. After



Staff Sgt. Carter, part of the White Platoon fire team, 8-1 Cavalry, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, provides overwatch on a road near Dahla Dam, Afghanistan, July 2012.



(Clockwise) Spc. Ty M. Carter, Spc. Cody Floyd, Spc. Christopher T. Griffin, Sgt. Eric Harder, Sgt. John Francis, Staff Sgt. Kirk Birchfield, Sgt. Scott Potempa, Spc. Michael Scusa, Pvt. Edward Faulkner, and Pfc. Daniel Rogers gather for a “thank you” photo at Combat Outpost Keating in 2009 for the canned food donated by Harder’s mother and her friends. Soldiers had a limited diet at the remote outpost, with hot food being rare.



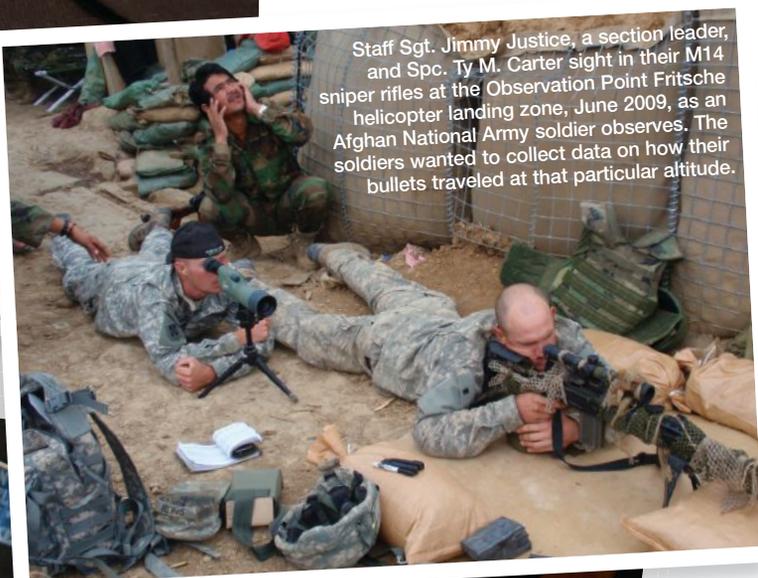


U.S. President Barack Obama places the Medal of Honor around Carter's neck during an August 26, 2013, White House ceremony.

hours that seemed like days, Ty was able to run out to rescue Mace, carrying him to safety as bullets rained down all around them. "From then on, I thought, 'No matter what terrible outcomes happen today, at least we saved Mace,'" he tells the crowd. Sadly, we learn that Specialist Mace's injuries were too severe. The room shares a collective gasp when we learn that Mace died on the operating table later that same day.

In addition to counseling and speaking openly to loved ones like his father, Ty explains that telling his story, although extremely difficult, is cathartic. He speaks with incredible honesty and vulnerability about his own inner-struggles with post-traumatic stress. The battlefield horrors he witnessed can never be unseen. Nothing can stop the wave

Nothing can stop the wave of emotion that sweeps over him when he visits the families of the men who died fighting alongside him. He openly admits the mix of guilt and trauma re-lived whenever he speaks to them. "Out of respect, I stay strong," he explains. "Only those closest to me can see the scars I bear from seeing good men take their last breath."



Staff Sgt. Jimmy Justice, a section leader, and Spc. Ty M. Carter sight in their M14 sniper rifles at the Observation Point Fritsche helicopter landing zone, June 2009, as an Afghan National Army soldier observes. The soldiers wanted to collect data on how their bullets traveled at that particular altitude.

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"Humble and Kind" (TIM MCGRAW)

With the entire audience teary and sitting on the edge of our seats, Ty concludes the hour by using his new honor as a forum to talk about the stress of war and the repercussions of trauma in general. "We must work to help those who believe there is something wrong with them. We must remove the stigma and encourage others to seek help for what is a natural response to traumatic events," he says passionately. "Unable to ask for help, they often self-medicate before they give up and take their own lives."

He makes a point to emphasize that post-traumatic stress is not strictly a soldier's problem. It affects police, fire fighters, first responders, and anyone who has survived a traumatic event, at home or abroad. Ty's message for all of those affected is loud and clear: No more suffering in silence. ♦

To learn more about Medal of Honor recipient Staff Sergeant Ty Carter and his ability to inspire others, contact Jennifer L. Aedo at 210.557.5651 or jennifer@tymcartermoh.com.